

Penn Camera Exchange  
414 Tenth St.  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-486

HABS  
DC,  
WASH,  
268-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

STATE District of Columbia	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY Washington
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Penn Camera Exchange		HABS NO. DC-486
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) 414 Tenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., Square 348, Lot 825		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) c. 1820 (see attached)	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) unknown	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) This commercial building features an unusual attic story with segmental-arched windows. It stands within a row of similar 19th Century structures and contributes to the predominant rhythm of the streetscape. It is located in the Pennsylvania Avenue Historic District.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Brick and frame; probably brick foundation later reinforced with concrete.		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) Rectangular in shape, the building measures 25' x 100'. It is three bays wide and three stories tall with a basement and attic.		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE 414 Tenth Street is three bays wide and three stories tall with a basement and attic. The first floor storefront is faced with a blue tile and metal framed show windows extend the width of the facade. Two metal and glass doors are centered on the facade and a cloth awning extends the width of the facade. Two diagonally projecting signs (see attached)		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) The basement is approximately 20' x 20'. A commercial refrigerator is located in the southwest corner of the space, and storage shelves and mechanical equipment fill the remainder of the space. Access is gained by a staircase along the south wall which enters the first floor behind service counters. The first floor has counters (see attached)		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES Building Permits cited include the following: (see attached)		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE All floors are currently used by the Penn Camera Exchange; the first floor for sales and all others for inventory storage. The building is in excellent condition.		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE The attic level is not a full floor space, but a room approximately 10' x 20'. It houses the elevator mechanisms and a small office space. See also DC-493 (SQUARE 348) for additional information.		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDE LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds; D.C. General Assessment Records, Tax Records, and Building Permits, National Archives; Baist's Atlas of Washington, Martin Luther King Library, Washingtoniana Room, Washington, D.C.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION W.F. Hunter, Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation		DATE February 1981

Date of Construction (cont'd)

Construction of this building prior to 1870 eliminates precise dating of the structure with building permits. Investigation in the Tax Records for the lot reveal a steady improvement value from 1839-1900 with no notations for new construction. The first permit for the building occurs in 1883 and the extant building appears on the 1887 Baist map. Stylistically, the building at 414 Tenth Street can easily fit into an early 19th Century period. Examination of foundation walls below the first level is impossible due to the lowering of the basement floor and a cement floor being installed.

Judging from the federal style roof and ceiling height, together with the overall facade design, a construction date of c. 1820 is quite plausible.

Exterior Features of Note (cont'd)

above the awning identify tenants a "Penn Camera, Inc."

Windows on the second and third stories are segmentally arched, with simple sills. The voissours of the arches are of bull-head (butt end out) and vertical brick, flush with the building surface. Window frames are wood, six-over-six double-hung sash.

Attic windows are also segmentally arched and are nearly square in shape. Sills and voissours are identical to lower floors.

The entablature consists only of a cornice and frieze. The cornice is multi-molded and the frieze is denticulated. Two periphery corbelled brackets extend from below the frieze to an arched projection above the roofline.

Below the attic and third floor windows are four square metal reinforcing rods. A metal and plastic sign is hung vertically directly over the center window of the second story.

Interior Features of Note (cont'd)

and shelves along all walls. An elevator is located just west of the staircase on the south wall. The second and third floors are open, high ceilinged spaces used for storage. On the third floor a wooden staircase leads to a small office and the elevator equipment, at attic level.

Major Alterations and Additions With Dates (cont'd)

5/4/83 #1297 - to build and area covered with flat cellar doors in iron and make general repairs inside.

7/2/85 #12 - (house) general repairs and set up for warehouse.

(Note: There are no other building permits on file for this building. The basement level has evidence of the floor being lowered approximately one foot and a cement floor being installed. This is visible along the west wall where the concrete is formed around what could be the foundations of the building at this point. The attic level could well be an addition/alteration, however it is not documented; possibly this was completed prior to 1870, when building permits were required.)